

Pricks Their Quest to Share Power

Continued From First Page

year-old Jamal Awad, who likes mathematics and is certain he will become a scientist. "Things will get better because either we will be triumphant in battle or I will go to paradise."

He and his family and most other residents of the southern suburbs have come here within the past 15 years, first after the Palestinians entered southern Lebanon and later after the Israeli invasion. Others were drawn here because there were no jobs for them where they lived before. They feel no allegiance to a government that has little served them, and they feel few ties to a community they have adopted only out of necessity.

The youngsters' eyes sparkle, however, as they talk about Ayatollah Khomeini. Mohammed Sardin, 11, who wears a sweatshirt labeled Harlem University, says of the ayatollah:

"He is a very strong, pious man whom we regard as we would our father. He enriches us with information as to how to defend ourselves and how to attack Israelis (who have occupied largely Shiite southern Lebanon). He teaches us how to use our godliness and our weapons against them."

Samira Hamoud, 10, who lives with her husband and eight children in a one-room pitbox home, doesn't know anything about politics. "I love Khomeini because God loves him," she says.

Mrs. Hamoud's unemployed husband sleeps soundly on a couch as children play around him. On the wall hang pictures of two sons. One is a member of the Amal militia. The other fights with the Lebanese army; in the picture, a grenade launcher rests on his shoulder.

A Bad Year

It hasn't been a good year for the Hamoud family. The father, a baggage handler at the airport, has been laid off. Fighting often causes all flights to be canceled, and constant tension has drastically reduced air traffic even during the lulls in the fighting. The children's education has been interrupted because all the public schools in the southern suburbs have been closed since late last year. One son has contracted polio, and the family car was blown up in the September fighting.

Mrs. Hamoud sighs, holding a child closely. "I thank God that all my children are alive," she says. "I want to live peacefully with all people. I only want a happy family."

Sahab al Haj is a different sort of Shiite altogether. Born in the southern suburbs to a member of parliament, he now is the chairman of the South-Lebanese Bank and of Fort Liban, the country's largest construction company. Sitting in his plush eighth-floor Beirut office overlooking the Mediterranean, Mr. Haj suggests some remedies.

He believes that "50% of the anger" of the southern suburbs could be siphoned off if only the government would put together an emergency economic and social program.

"Poverty spots are excellent seedbeds for anything," he says. "What percentage of communists of Russia initially became

communists because of political philosophy and what percentage because of deprivation and resentment? People resort to violence mainly when they see no other way to improve their lot."

Mr. Haj favors some quick measures to immediately show good intentions. He would start by building a first class water system. Much of the water now is bad, and many residents have become ill from drinking it. He would also start building 20 good high schools. At the moment, there are only four. He would buy 20 garbage trucks and send them into areas where garbage has been piling up for weeks. And he would repair the neglected sewer system.

So far, all the government has done to deal with the southern suburbs is to surround them with soldiers and artillery and to set up extensive checkpoints to keep out arms and agitators—which to some extent got in anyway. Exchanges of sniper shots and shelling are almost daily occurrences, and people here live in constant fear that either the U.S. Marines—whose bases adjoin the south—or the Lebanese army will march into their area to "cleanse it."

"It's a vicious cycle," Mr. Haj says. "You ignore your child, he starts misbehaving. You beat him, he rebels against you. You beat him again and he will probably resort to physical violence. That isn't the way to handle a child."

A Shi'ite's View

Do the Shi'ites really want an Islamic state? One of the leading clerics in the southern suburbs, Mohammed Hassan (last name), says he doesn't think the time is right for it. But Sheikh Fadlallah—who denies allegations that he was involved in the Oct. 23 bombing of the U.S. Marine headquarters—won't rule out an Islamic state for all time.

He takes off his black sandals and tucks his stocking feet under him on a brown velvet couch as sniper fire outside his home becomes more intense. Two members of his own private militia sit beside him and hang on every word.

"If the people call for it," he says, "then we should give them the assistance to attain what they would like. In the very near future, it isn't needed. However, if a time comes and the Islamic state can be attained without violence, then we will think about it."

Even now, there is increased fascination with Iran's Islamic revolution. When the Lebanese government recently shut down the Iranian embassy, on the ground that Iranian Revolutionary Guards were operating in Lebanon against the government's wishes, protesters paraded through the southern suburbs.

More than 150 cars lined up, plastered with posters of the ayatollah and of Sheikh Mustafa Sadr, Amal's founder who has been missing since a visit to Libya in 1976. One car carried a banner that read, "Death to America." A young member of Amal commented that the Revolutionary Guards had come "as missionaries," independent of the Iranian government.

A recent visit to Beirut al Farajeh's market showed just how deep the tension and readiness to strike back have become. An American asked a woman what her reaction was to recent air attacks on Shiite encampments of the extremist leader Hussein Mouawad in the Bekaa Valley.

Within minutes, 10 women had gathered, surrounding the American, all of them shouting various warnings. None had heard of Mr. Mouawad or of Western charges that he was involved in terrorist attacks on the French, Americans and Israelis. They knew only that he was a Shiite and that he had been attacked by outsiders.

A woman named Rawan threatened her child in the American's face. "Why do you want to kill our fathers, our sons, our brothers?" she screamed, her face clear even under the scarf that concealed all but the center of her face. "If you attack us, all we women will turn ourselves into bombs and blow you up."

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Fadlallah, Muhammad Hussain